

The Work of the Holy Spirit.

A S E R M O N,

ON

ROMANS viii. 9.



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is none of his.*



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No. IX.

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NOTWITHSTANDING the various distinctions which subsist among men, there are but *two* of any real consequence in the sight of God; and these are mentioned by St. Paul just before our text—“They that are *after the flesh*, and mind the things of the flesh; and they that are *after the Spirit*, and who mind the things of the Spirit;” ver. 5. that is, those people, who remaining in the state they were born, do habitually consult and relish, pursue and delight in worldly, sensual, and sinful things; or, on the contrary, those who, being born again of the Spirit, are under his guidance and influence; and therefore pursue, regard, and love things that are of a spiritual and heavenly nature. Every person here belongs to one of these classes; and it behoves us seriously to examine to which of them; for on this depends our eternal all. He who is *after the flesh* “cannot please God,” verse 8. but is in a state of death, ver. 6. or, as it is in the text, “is none of Christ’s,” that is, not a member of his body, not a child in his family, not a subject of his kingdom, and dying in this state, Christ will not own him for his, nor adjudge him to eternal life at the great day. But if, by the grace of God, we have the Holy Spirit, and live under his gracious influences, it is a proof that we belong to Christ, and shall obtain eternal glory with him. How
necessary

necessary is it then that we should be able to decide with certainty on this great question, and to know whether we belong to Christ or not. That we may be able to do this, let us pray to God to assist us while we,

I. Consider who the Spirit of Christ is.

II. Prove that all real christians have the Spirit of Christ; and shew for what purposes: and,

III. Point out the evidence of our state, arising from thence.

I. Let us consider who the Spirit of Christ is.

The whole scripture declares, that "there is but one only living and true God;" but the scripture clearly shews, that in the unity of the Godhead, there are three (whom we call persons): thus, in 1 John v. 7.

"There are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." They are generally called by the

names, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; which names are not intended to describe the manner of their subsistence among themselves; (for that is a branch of knowledge above our capacity, and is not revealed) but the manner of their operations in the covenant of grace. To each of these divine persons particular

works and attributes are ascribed, and each of them is expressly called God. The divine person we now speak of, is the Holy Spirit; called in the same verse with our text, "the Spirit of God." That he is properly called a *Person* appears from the personal properties and works ascribed to him. He is said to have *Understanding* or *wisdom*, 1 Cor. ii. 10. Isa. ii. 3. He is said to have a *Will*, 1 Cor. xii. 11. He is possessed of *Power*, Job xxxii. 4. He is said to *teach*

us,

us, John xiv. 26. 1 Joh. ii. 27. to lead—to guide—to convince—to renew—to speak—to shew—to call—and send ministers. This plainly proves that he is a Person, and not merely a quality or property of Deity, as some have vainly pretended.

It is equally evident that he is a *Divine Person*, or truly and properly God, equal with the Father and the Son; for divine perfections are ascribed to him, as *Eternity—Omnipresence—*or being every where; and *Omniscience*, or knowing all things. The Holy Spirit is expressly called *God*. Ananias is said to lie to the Holy Ghost, Acts. v. 3. and, in the next verse, St. Peter says to him, “Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” The same person is intended in both verses, which plainly shews that the Holy Ghost is God. This also appears from the *sin* against the Holy Ghost; if he were not God, would blaspheming him be a sin, an unpardonable sin? But above all, consider the form of baptism. Our Lord commands his apostles to “disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” So likewise in the usual form of benediction: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you.” In both these cases, the very same honours are ascribed to the Spirit as are given to the other divine persons; which would be blasphemy, if he were not a divine person, or truly and properly God.

He is called in our text the *Spirit of Christ*, not only because he *proceeded* from Christ, as well as from the Father, but because he was *promised* by Christ, and *sent* by Christ. He was the Spirit of Christ in all the ancient prophets; and he now “testifies of Christ,”

Christ," "takes the things of Christ, and shews them unto us;" in a word, because the whole salvation of Christ is applied to the heart by his sacred influences. We are now, in the second place, to—

II. Prove that all real christians have the Spirit of Christ, and to shew, for what purposes they have him. So necessary is this to salvation; that St. Paul declares in our text, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" that is, he is no christian.

It is one of the most dangerous errors of this day, to maintain that the influences of the Spirit are not now to be expected, and that they were confined to the days of the Apostles, when they had power to work miracles. In consequence of this wicked notion, all that is said of Conversion, Regeneration, and Consolation, is out of date; and poor ignorant souls are lulled asleep in carnal security, contentedly resting in the form of godliness without the power; while they are taught, by their blind leaders, to call all true, vital, and felt religion, nonsense and enthusiasm.

That any of the clergy of the Church of England should thus deny the work of the Spirit is extremely absurd and inconsistent, because that church strongly maintains the necessity of it in many parts of the Common Prayer Book. In the Collects you may recollect these petitions: "Grant unto us thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good." In another place, "Send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity." In the Communion service she prays, "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit." Observe also the prayer for the King; "Replenish him with the grace of thy Holy Spirit;" and for the

Royal Family, "Endue them with thy Holy Spirit." In the XIIIth Article of the Church, it is affirmed, that "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are not pleasant to God." Every clergyman, at his Ordination, is asked by the Bishop this question: "Do you trust that you are moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?" To which the minister replies, "I trust so." You see then, my brethren, that the Church of England strongly maintains the continuance of the work of the Spirit as necessary to all true ministers and christians. How then do any affirm that his influences have ceased 1600 years? But as our faith must not rest on the authority of men, let us search the scriptures to prove that the work of the Spirit on the heart is absolutely necessary to true godliness.

We freely grant indeed, that the *extraordinary* gifts of the Holy Ghost were confined to the first ages. Who now pretends to the gift of tongues, or power of working miracles? We do not plead for infallibility, or knowledge of future events, or ability to know any thing not revealed in the bible. It is for the *sanctifying influences* of the Spirit we plead. The Apostles and first christians received from the Spirit not only the miraculous powers just mentioned, but light in their understandings, conviction of sin in their consciences, and faith and love to Christ in their hearts. They "purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit;" they "abounded in hope by the Holy Ghost;" they had "joy in the Holy Ghost;" "the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost;" "Through the same Spirit they "mortified the deeds of the body;" and "cried Abba, Father." The Spirit was "the earnest of their heavenly

heavenly inheritance;" and all their holy tempers, affections, and actions, are called "fruits of the Spirit." And are not all these things as necessary to us as they were to them? Corrupt nature is just the same now as then, and needs the same power to change it. Grace is also just the same now as it was then, and is derived from the same source. This alone is enough to prove the necessity of the Spirit's work.

Observe also, that our blessed Lord promised that his Spirit should *abide* and *continue* with the church, instead of his corporal presence. So he speaks, John xiv. 18. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may *abide with you for ever*." Observe, he was promised to abide with the church *for ever*; not with the Apostles only, for he was to be "given to all who should believe;" and that, not for two or three hundred years, but for ever; all the time of Christ's absence from earth, until he shall come the second time to judgment. But this will more fully appear by considering the *purposes* for which the Spirit is given.

All men are by nature "dead in trespasses and sins;" dead to God and spiritual things; as a corpse in the grave is dead to the affairs of this world. Now "it is the Spirit that quickeneth," John vii. 63. The word of Christ in the gospel is employed for this end. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God;" but it is by the Spirit's power that the dead soul is quickened to hear it. The word is brought home to the heart, and is then heard, "not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God." O that the word may now be heard among us in this manner! The Spirit of God is called "the Spirit of truth." No man knows the truth, in a saving manner but by

his teaching. A scholar may know the letter of it, but no human learning can give its true meaning. St. Paul affirms, 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man (that is, the rational man), receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." It is well said in one of the Homilies, "Man's human and worldly wisdom and science, is not needful to the understanding of scripture, but the revelation of the Holy Ghost, who inspirerth the true meaning unto them that with humility and diligence search therefore." This is great comfort for poor people, who are apt to say, they are no scholars, and therefore cannot understand the bible. Pray, my friends, for the Holy Spirit, and you will then understand it better than the most learned man who has not the Spirit.

Again, the Spirit is given to every real christian to "reprove, or convince of sin." We are by nature ignorant of God's holy law, and therefore of sin, which is the transgression of the law. We are "alive without the law," as St. Paul once was; but when the commandment comes home to the conscience, by the power of the blessed Spirit, then we are deeply sensible of our lost and ruined condition; of the sins of our life; of the sins of our heart; and of the sin of our nature; especially the great sin of unbelief, in rejecting Christ, and neglecting his precious salvation.

Again, It is by the power of the Spirit that we are enabled to believe to the saving of the soul. If we see the *need* of salvation, it is by his grace. If we see the *way* of salvation, it is by his teaching. If we are made willing to be saved in that way, it is by his power. Faith is the gift of God. We believe by the

the operation of the Spirit. And indeed it is a great thing to believe. To receive cordially the whole testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ. In the view of our sin and misery, as children of wrath, to believe that Christ *can* and *will* save us. With a heavy burden of guilt on the conscience, to cast that burden on the Lord, and so find rest to our souls. To renounce our own works and merits, and trust alone to the righteousness of Christ. This is a great work; a work that none can perform but by "the Spirit of faith."

The Spirit of Christ is also called "the Spirit of holiness;" for he is the author of that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Believers are "chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Regeneration is the beginning of a new and spiritual life. Sanctification is the work of the Spirit in preserving and increasing that life. All true christians are saints, as you may see in several of the epistles, which were written to the saints: and though through the folly and wickedness of many this is become a term of reproach, let all men know, that if we are not saints we cannot be saved.

Another purpose for which believers have the Spirit, is to assist them in all religious duties. "Without me, said Christ, ye can do nothing." Christ is present, by his Spirit, "wherever two or three are gathered together in his name;" and if they get a blessing under the word preached, or in singing psalms or hymns, or in prayer, it is intirely from the influence of the Holy Ghost. He is said, Rom. viii. 28. to "help our infirmities in prayer;" and we read also of "praying in the Spirit, and of singing in the Spirit."

The Holy Ghost is also given to believers as a *Comforter*. There is comfort in religion. The ways of God are pleasantness and peace, and none will deny it, but those who never tried them. True happiness is found only in the way of faith, love, and obedience. The knowledge of sin forgiven; peace of conscience through the blood of Christ; a good hope through grace; victory over the fear of death: are not these comfortable and blessed things? What can the world or sin propose of equal value? Well, all these are from the gracious and powerful influences of the Spirit; and this leads us to the last thing proposed.

III. The evidence of our state, as it arises from having, or not having the Spirit. Our text says, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," consequently, is in a dreadful condition; and dying so, must perish for ever without remedy. But the words imply a glorious truth, namely, that some persons do belong to Christ. Yes, they are his dear people, by the gift of the Father, by the purchase of his blood, and by the power of his Spirit, whereby they gave themselves up to him.

Having the Spirit, in the manner, and for the purposes we have heard, is the grand proof of being in a state of salvation. This is called the *Seal*, (2 Cor. i. 21. Eph. i. 13. iv. 30.) Valuable things are sealed for the security of them, and to denote whose property they are. Thus are believers sealed. God has given them his Spirit, he dwells in their souls; he quickens them; he enlightens them; he convinces them of sin; he enables them to believe in Christ; he sanctifies them; he helps them to pray; he comforts their hearts. This is God's seal. It cannot be counter-

counterfeited. Whoever has the Spirit has the sure earnest of heaven; 2 Cor. i. 22. Eph. i. 14. he becomes "a joint heir with Jesus Christ;" he has "the first fruits of the Spirit;" and both soul and body shall certainly be made happy for ever in the eternal world.

APPLICATION.

And now, dear immortals, what do you think of these things? Seeing that having the Spirit of God determines our state, how is it with you? Have you the Spirit? It may be known. It ought to be known; for our all depends upon it. Heaven is ours if we have the Spirit. Hell will be ours if we die without him. Recollect a moment, what has been said, and pray with David, "Search me, O Lord, and try my heart." You have heard for what purposes every believer receives the Spirit. He quickens the dead soul. Has he quickened you? Are you alive to God, or are you alive to sin and the world? He enlightens the mind in the truth. Do you know, distinguish, and love the truth of the gospel, or do you despise and hate it? He convinces of sin. Are you convinced and humbled for your iniquity? or do you make light of it—perhaps boast of it? He is the author of faith. Do you believe in Jesus, or do you neglect his salvation? He sanctifies the soul. Is your soul sanctified by his grace, or are you wallowing in the filth of sin? He helps the true christian to pray. Do you know any thing of his gracious help in prayer; or do you live without prayer, or, which is nearly as bad, content yourself with a lifeless form of bare words without the heart? The Spirit of God is a Comforter. Is your comfort and pleasure derived from him; or from

from the vanities and vices of the world? May the Lord enable you to give a serious and honest answer to these inquiries! If, as it may be feared, some of you are without the Spirit, what is your case? You belong not to Christ; you are none of his. Tremble at the dreadful thought. Die you must; and you must come to judgment too. When you see him on the awful throne, O how will you wish to belong to him, and to be owned by him. O then, be persuaded, this moment, to lift up your heart to God, and say, Merciful God, give me thy Holy Spirit! He has promised to give him to those who ask. This blessed gift may yet be yours, and shall, if you sincerely desire it. "Ask then, and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and the door shall be opened." God almighty, in compassion to your souls, enable you to do this.

And as to those who have obtained this greatest of blessings, who have the Holy Spirit, what more can be said to you? Survey the wondrous gift with grateful astonishment. What has God wrought! Deny not, from false humility, the heavenly benefit. Have you not experienced those sacred effects of the Spirit, which have been repeatedly mentioned? Here then is the broad seal of the majesty of heaven, securing your relation to Christ, and your title to mansions of glory. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; and having received the Spirit, take care to "walk in the Spirit," and to bring forth "the fruits of the Spirit," which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God. Amen.